

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., an outspoken advocate for African interests, continued his fight to make Africa a priority in U.S. foreign policy. During a congressional hearing, yesterday, on the foreign operations budget, Congressman Jackson pressed for and received a public assurance from Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice that Africa would be a "top priority" for the Bush administration and her State Department.

Condoleeza Rice is only the second African American to hold the position of Secretary of State, Jackson noted. However, Jackson said, "more important than your appointment, are your statements and the president's declarations, which have suggested to the world that finally Africa might gain greater attention, involvement, and resources from U.S. foreign policy makers."

The president and the Secretary of State's rhetoric on Africa is not reflected in the president's budget. Jackson said, "In the President's budget request, the top four country recipients of U.S. aid receive approximately \$6 billion. But, when we examine the President's budget request for all of sub-Saharan Africa, a region containing 48 nations, the President's request is approximately \$3.6 billion. \$6 billion dollars for 4 countries, yet only \$4 billion dollars for 48 countries." Jackson questioned Rice, "How can you reconcile such an egregious disparity in funding for Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in light of the challenges facing the continent?"

Jackson advised Secretary Rice to "look at the true nature of the challenges facing Africa - poverty, disease, war, and even genocide. We must determine whether the U.S. government's aid is enough to successfully assist Africa in overcoming these challenges," he concluded.

Congressman Jackson has served on the House Appropriations Committee for six years and sits on the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs, which allocates foreign aid.